



## ACCESSIBLE NEWS N° 33

### Visit Us at CSUN

ADIO will be back again this year at the annual Technology & Disability Conference, which is presented by California State University, Northridge (CSUN: [www.csun.edu/cod/conf/2008](http://www.csun.edu/cod/conf/2008)) in Los Angeles from March 10-15. If you are attending CSUN, drop by and say hello. You'll find us in Booth Number 336 in the Marriott Hotel's main exhibit hall. Just look for the booth with the big Canadian flag.

This year, our booth will again have product literature on display from various Canadian AT companies and organizations, along with the Accessible Procurement Toolkit.

### **CRTC approves initiatives to benefit Canadians with disabilities and expand rural broadband services**

On January 17, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) today approved several initiatives that will benefit Canadians with disabilities and expand broadband services to rural and remote communities. The major local telephone companies were also directed by the Commission to finalize proposals for the dispersal of the funds in their deferral accounts.

"Today's decision will not only make telecommunications services more accessible to all Canadians, but also serve to enhance social and economic development in underserved communities," said Len Katz, the CRTC's Vice-Chairman of Telecommunications.

In 2002, the Commission set out its price cap framework. This included rules governing the rates charged to residential and business consumers as well as to competitor companies by the major local telephone companies. One of the elements of the price regulation regime was the deferral account.

Price cap regulation places a ceiling on prices a company can charge its customers. At the same time, in order to avoid an adverse impact on local competition as a result of mandated rate reductions under the price cap framework, the Commission required each major local telephone company to create a deferral account. The companies were requested to place into those accounts amounts equal to the revenue reductions that would otherwise have resulted from an application of the price cap formula.

In 2006, the Commission determined that the funds that had accumulated in the deferral accounts should be used for the expansion of broadband (high-speed Internet) services and for initiatives to improve accessibility to telecommunications services for persons with disabilities. The Commission also concluded that any funds remaining after these initiatives had been approved should be rebated to the companies' residential local service subscribers in non-high-cost serving areas.

In 2007, the Commission revised its price cap framework and eliminated the deferral account mechanism. As such, no funds will be accumulated in the deferral accounts on a going forward basis.

The proposals approved by the Commission in January include initiatives to improve accessibility to telecommunications services for persons with disabilities in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec. In developing their proposals, the companies consulted with federal and provincial governments, national and provincial organizations representing persons with disabilities, and researchers in the field.

The proposals included initiatives to:

- introduce Internet Protocol Relay, a text-based tool that would allow persons who are deaf, hard of hearing or have difficulty speaking to communicate through the telephone system with hearing persons through a relay agent;
- introduce Video Relay Service, a service that would allow a person using sign language and another person using voice to communicate through a relay agent via high-speed Internet and video camera;
- improve Voice Activated Dialling service;
- enhance Directory Assistance;
- improve access to certain telecommunications services for persons with sight and mobility disabilities;
- improve accessibility to the websites of some of the major local telephone companies;
- establish a single point of contact for persons with disabilities to receive customer service tailored to the specific needs of the customer;
- conduct research into the needs of persons with disabilities during the development process of new products and services; and

- provide free teletypewriter (TTY) units to all Transition Houses in Saskatchewan. With this decision, as well as one issued in July 2007, funds will also be used to expand broadband services to more than 350 rural and remote communities in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec.

Any funds remaining in the deferral accounts will be rebated to the relevant residential subscribers living in urban areas in these provinces. The Commission directed the major local telephone companies to file, by March 25, 2008, proposals outlining how rebates could be most effectively made both in terms of benefits to customers and minimal disruption to companies.

It is estimated that over \$650 million has accumulated in the deferral accounts since they were created in 2002. Bell Aliant (in Ontario and Quebec), Bell Canada, MTS Allstream, SaskTel and TELUS were required to place into their accounts an amount equal to the revenue reductions that would otherwise have resulted from the application of the price cap formula.

The full text of the decision can be found on the CTRC Web site: Telecom Decision CRTC 2008-1  
([www.crtc.gc.ca/archive/eng/decisions/2008/dt2008-1.htm](http://www.crtc.gc.ca/archive/eng/decisions/2008/dt2008-1.htm))

### **Canadian Transportation Agency decides in favour of one-person-one-fare policy**

On January 10, the Canadian Transportation Agency has ordered Air Canada, Air Canada Jazz and WestJet to adopt a one-person-one-fare policy for persons with severe disabilities who travel within Canada by air. The airlines have one year to implement the policy. The tribunal's Decision means that for domestic services, Air Canada, Air Canada Jazz and WestJet may not charge more than one fare for persons with disabilities who are accompanied by an attendant for their personal care or safety in flight, as required by the carriers' domestic tariffs, or require additional seating for themselves, including those determined to be functionally disabled by obesity for purposes of air travel.

The Decision does NOT apply to persons with disabilities or others who prefer to travel with a companion for personal reasons; persons with disabilities who require a personal care attendant at destination, but not in-flight; and persons who are obese but not disabled as a result of their obesity.

The airlines are expected to develop a screening process to assess eligibility under the one-person-one-fare policy. For persons who travel with an attendant as required by the carriers' domestic tariffs, the Decision notes that carriers already

perform assessments and have screening mechanisms to determine fitness and conditions for travel. Their screening mechanisms could be adapted to include functional assessments, and related screening expertise is available to them. For persons disabled by obesity, the Agency cites the practical experience of Southwest Airlines, which screens for entitlement to an additional seat by determining whether a person can lower the seat's armrests.

The airlines failed to demonstrate to the Agency that implementation of a one-person-one-fare policy will impose undue hardship on them. The Agency estimates that the cost of implementing the one-person-one-fare policy represents 0.09 per cent of Air Canada's annual passenger revenues of \$8.2 billion and 0.16 per cent of WestJet's equivalent revenues of \$1.4 billion.

The three applicants in the case were the Council of Canadians with Disabilities, Joanne Neubauer of Victoria, and the Estate of the late Eric Norman, who was a resident of Gander, Newfoundland and Labrador.

In a separate statement, the Agency offered to facilitate a collaborative process for implementation of the one-person-one-fare Decision. "It would be desirable to have a common screening approach to determine eligibility to benefit under the one-person-one-fare policy," said Geoffrey Hare, Chairman and CEO of the Agency. "A co-operative approach would be potentially beneficial to Air Canada, Air Canada Jazz, WestJet and the Gander International Airport Authority as well as other Canadian air carriers and airport authorities that may consider voluntary implementation of the one-person-one-fare policy."

### **13th Biennial Conference of the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC 2008)**

- by Ann Sutton and Jeff Riley, conference co-chairs

"Leading the way" is the theme of ISAAC 2008, which will be held in Montreal in August 2008. ISAAC and its members have been leaders in AAC around the world for almost 25 years. ISAAC officially began in 1983 with a small group of individuals and has grown into an organization that is recognized internationally for the expertise, dedication, and creativity of its members.

There is much to celebrate in 2008, ISAAC's 25th anniversary. The field of AAC has changed enormously in the last 25 years, and will continue to evolve in the future. Technological advances and new perspectives on human communication have shaped the evolution of AAC. Individuals who use AAC for their daily communication have increasingly taken on leadership roles in many different

ways. Examples of leadership will be showcased as part of the 2008 conference program. Papers, presentations, and discussions of research projects, clinical and educational concerns, and issues of interest to individuals who use AAC systems will round out the program.

The conference committees are preparing an exceptional event. In addition to the exciting main conference program, there will be pre-conference workshops on current topics in AAC, and the research symposium following the main conference will be a must for AAC researchers. Montreal is the perfect site for the 2008 conference. A city with an interesting history and a bright future, Montreal is a lively place to visit, especially in the summertime. There will be opportunities to take advantage of all Montreal has to offer.

We are looking forward to welcoming ISAAC to Montreal in 2008. See you there!

August 2-7, 2008  
Montreal, Quebec  
**[www.isaac2008.org](http://www.isaac2008.org)**

ISAAC 2008 – JPdL  
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### **Industry Alliance Formed to Improve Access to Technology**

On December 10, a coalition of leading information and assistive technology companies that includes Edmonton's Madentec (**[www.madentec.com](http://www.madentec.com)**) announced the formation of the Accessibility Interoperability Alliance (AIA). This is an engineering working group dedicated to enabling developers to more easily create accessible software, hardware and web products. Four projects have been chosen to begin the AIA's work:

- developing a set of keyboard shortcuts to provide consistent behaviour to users of assistive technology (AT) products in any Web browser;
- modifying and/or extending existing accessibility models (Microsoft UI Automation, IAccessible2 and others) to improve the interoperability and exchange of information between IT and AT products;

- UI Automation extensions, which will add features and capabilities to support additional rich document scenarios, address new web scenarios and more; and
- an Accessible Rich Internet Applications Suite (ARIA) mapping of rich web accessibility information through UI Automation to ensure maximum value for AT products.

In addition to Madentec, AIA founding members include IT companies such as Adobe, BayFirst Solutions LLC, Microsoft and Novell Inc., hardware manufacturer HP and AT companies such as Claro Software Ltd., Dolphin Computer Access, GW Micro Inc., HiSoftware Inc., Texthelp Systems and QualiLife. Leading nongovernmental organizations may also participate and share their expertise on these and future AIA projects. More information on AIA can be found at [www.AccessInteropAlliance.org](http://www.AccessInteropAlliance.org).

### **HumanWare Reorganizes its Operations**

On January 14, HumanWare ([www.humanware.com](http://www.humanware.com)) announced that it would be reorganizing its activities. HumanWare is integrating its Research and Development, Marketing and Production operations under a single line of responsibility for each department. Sales activities are also integrated under three new geographical regions: the Americas, Europe (including Middle East and Africa) and Australasia.

Three new vice-presidents for Marketing, Research and Development, and Operations respectively have been appointed and will be responsible for both New Zealand and Canadian activities. The business managers for the United States, Europe and Australia business divisions will see their responsibilities extended into new geographical markets.

This reorganization results from the appointment of Mr. Gilles Pepin as the new CEO of the HumanWare Group in November 2007. His objective is to build a strong management structure to support HumanWare's growth in its activities in the visually impaired segment and across new markets.

"We are creating a stronger, more efficient and more dynamic operational structure to better support our existing customers and products, but also to introduce new initiatives such as enhanced customer focus, superior product quality and a wider range of product solutions," said Gilles Pepin, HumanWare's CEO. "To achieve this, we need to streamline our operations and better integrate our activities, some of which are over extended across the globe."

HumanWare expects to reap major benefits for its customers as a result of this reorganization, such as reduced product development cycle, lower product costs and higher product quality. HumanWare will keep introducing new exciting products in 2008 following several major product introductions in 2007, including Victor Reader Stream, ClassMate Reader, myReader 2 and a Math tutorial for the BrailleNote mPower.

The following people within the organization have been assigned new Group responsibilities: Greg Brown as Corporate Controller, Richard Nadeau as VP of Operations, Pierre Hamel as VP of Research and Development and Ivan Lagacé as VP of Marketing. Ron Hathaway, Managing Director of Australia and Asia will now add New Zealand Sales to his responsibilities. Renee Gosselin is now the Manager of Market Development for all products. Pedro Polson and Phil Rance are keeping the same positions.

### **Federal Elevator Celebrates 20th Anniversary**

Federal Elevator ([www.federalelevator.com](http://www.federalelevator.com)), a leader in the manufacturing of elevators for the use of the elderly and disabled is turning 20 years old in April 2008. The achievement of this significant milestone finds the Company in the midst of continuing growth with double digit increases in elevators shipped to the Canadian, US and international markets.

During 2007, the Company introduced the Legacy, its new Residential Elevator loaded with many special features and capabilities to enhance the ability to be used by persons in need of vertical transportation. Operating from its own modern, state of the art manufacturing facility in Brampton, Ontario, Federal Elevator is happy to be reaching 20 years in business and is poised for continuous growth supplying high quality, value priced elevators.

### **T-Base Communications Celebrates with Canada Post in Breaking Guinness World Record™**

In November it was announced that Canada Post had received recognition from the Guinness World Records™ for helping Santa respond to the largest volume of letters to Santa - letters that are answered in more than 25 languages, including braille. Ottawa's T-Base Communications ([www.tbases.com](http://www.tbases.com)) provided the braille translations to Canada Post at no charge. T-Base established a long-term partnership with Canada Post in 2002, benefiting blind, deaf-blind and partially sighted children from around the world. Each year, T-Base ensures that Santa can respond directly to blind, deaf-blind and partially sighted children, replying to

wish lists received in braille on a daily basis. Letters in braille have been received and alternatively responded to throughout Canada in both official languages, and the program has been as far-reaching as Belgium, France and India.

"This partnership has greatly benefited the Letters to Santa program, assisting in setting the Guinness record by making it possible to reach more children worldwide," says Robert Waite, senior vice-president, Stakeholder Relations and Brand at Canada Post.

"With the Santa Letter-writing Program, Canada Post truly delivers. Their ongoing recognition of the importance for blind, deaf-blind and partially sighted children to independently write to, and receive letters from Santa is commendable," says Sharlyn Ayotte, President and CEO of T-Base Communications. "We consider ourselves privileged to provide a service that brings the magic of Christmas to a greater number of children, subsequently contributing to Canada Post's impressive record-breaking numbers," adds Ayotte.

T-Base will continue to work with Canada Post on the Santa Letter-writing Program in the coming years, further extending the reach to children with disabilities next year by offering expanded alternate format communications such as large print, e-text and audio formats.

### **Upcoming Conferences in Canada**

Here's what's happening in Canada between March 1 and May 31, 2008. Please note that the language in each of the following entries is the language in which the conference was submitted to the conference list:

March 5 - 8, 2008

#### **24th International Seating Symposium**

Vancouver, BC, CANADA

Contact: Yolande Chang

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email: [ipad@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:ipad@interchange.ubc.ca)

URL: [www.interprofessional.ubc.ca](http://www.interprofessional.ubc.ca)

For more conference listings, including what's coming up in other countries, see the "Conference Listings in Assistive Devices" link on the ADIO Web site: [www.at-links.gc.ca/as/as001E.asp](http://www.at-links.gc.ca/as/as001E.asp) . This is also the link you should use to submit your conferences (Canadian or international) for inclusion in the listings.

## News Bits

In December, HumanWare ([www.humanware.ca](http://www.humanware.ca)) announced that Ken Patterson had joined the ranks of its Western Canada sales force. His responsibilities will be to work closely with Western Canada Sales Manager Steven Phillips to make sure that customers in Western Canada receive quality equipment, training and after sales support. Ken worked for the CNIB for 20 years and prior to joining HumanWare, he had been responsible for the Assistive Technology Department in the CNIB's Calgary office.

On December 19, the United Nations General Assembly renamed the International Day of Disabled Persons, observed every year on 3 December, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The 192 Member States of the General Assembly took that decision unanimously when adopting a resolution on "Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons: realizing the Millennium Development Goals for persons with disabilities". The Assembly also called on United Nations agencies and bodies engaged in development, humanitarian assistance and protection of the environment to ensure that the disability perspective is incorporated in their work.

On January 15, Burlington, Ontario's EPIC Software ([www.epic-soft.com](http://www.epic-soft.com)), a privately held Human Resources Software and Professional Services Consulting firm announced that it will be launching a new Software as a Service (SaaS) product to assist organizations manage their Work Place Health and Safety (H&S) programs and audits more efficiently and cost effectively. Liz Jansen, the company's Managing Director for Canada said, "Given EPIC Software's excellent research, product development and implementation teams, the recently heightened visibility of work place health and safety initiatives by the Government of the Province of Ontario and The Workplace Safety & Insurance Board's "Road to Zero" initiative, it makes perfectly good sense that EPIC Software is the first software provider to launch a fully integrated Health & Safety Audit Management System. EPIC Software's Health & Safety Audit Management System includes forms that can be downloaded, edited in MS-WORD and then posted to the system to ensure a single system of record captures the required documentation; date and time-stamping every document as it is uploaded into the system. This work flow makes H&S Accident Reports, Committee Meetings and Audits, to name only a few of the detailed H&S Processes and reporting requirements, much more effective, efficient and easy to administer and track" Jansen also added. For more information, please visit the EPIC Software web site or contact Liz Jansen, B.A., CHRP, Director - Canada, tel.: 519-938-9094, North America Toll Free Messaging: 1-800-627-415, email: [liz.jansen@epic-soft.com](mailto:liz.jansen@epic-soft.com) .

The Assistive Technology Industry Association (ATIA: [www.atia.org](http://www.atia.org)) held its 9th annual conference in Orlando, Florida from January 30 to February 2 and once again, Canadian AT companies were present to show off their innovative products and to provide expert advice and information at conference sessions. Exhibitors included Compusult ([www.compusult.nf.ca](http://www.compusult.nf.ca)), Daedalus Technologies and Adaptive Computer Control Technologies ([www.acctinc.ca](http://www.acctinc.ca)), HumanWare ([www.humanware.ca](http://www.humanware.ca)), Madentec ([www.madentec.com](http://www.madentec.com)), Quillsoft ([www.wordq.com](http://www.wordq.com)) and Tash ([www.tashinc.com](http://www.tashinc.com)).

## **Our Web Site**

Our Web site can be found at [www.at-links.gc.ca](http://www.at-links.gc.ca). At this site are all our old newsletters as well as different listings and links to other sites of interest. Should you be using these old newsletters, please bear in mind that the web addresses were correct when the newsletter was created but that they may not be accurate now. We do not plan to change the back issues of the newsletters.

## **Communications from ADIO**

If you would prefer to receive our newsletter on disk or by e-mail, please contact us at the address below.

## **Where to Find Us**

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Aussi disponible en français.